

642B0DTE070 – Second part of third lecture: Completes Meaning, begins Religion
Wednesday, August 4, 1971

[Concluding Remarks on Meaning]

What I was saying about differentiations of consciousness and stages of meaning constitutes one of the fundamental problems at the present time. You can have the religious differentiation of consciousness, the scientific, one of philosophic interiority; and it is all very well for people who have all these differentiations; but how are they to communicate with those that haven't? Medieval theology represents a triple differentiation of consciousness: common sense, theory, and religion, religious differentiation of consciousness. It is fundamentally in terms of being, a metaphysics, that it built up its theology. The crisis of that theology, at the present time, is of course the fact that philosophy is moving into interiority, and you are in effect bringing about a fundamental shift in the way in which theologians talk. You can bring about that fundamental shift in the way in which theologians talk and keep saying the same thing really as was said in the medieval period or you can start saying something entirely different. Moreover, the problem of catechetics, of communications, teaching religion to people generally, without any differentiation of consciousness, you want to be able to express the religion in simply commonsense terms and in the common sense of any culture and any class in any culture.

The Theological Commission in Rome, the first topic they picked for a subcommittee to work on was 'The Unity of Faith in Cultural Pluralism.' As long as you have a classicist culture and you think there is only one culture, well, you can quite easily have a common expression of faith and say, well, of course, the people, the natives, the barbarians, you can't expect them really to understand it. But when you have an empirical concept of culture as exists at the present time, where a culture is a set of meanings and values that inform a way of life, then you have to have as many expressions of the faith

as there are different cultures. And you have to have some way of keeping a uniformity there, a common doctrine, because it is all coming from the one Christ.

So that business of the differentiations of consciousness and the stages of meaning is concerned with one of the basic problems of our time, of the transition going on in the church at the present time. And the better one understands it the more one will understand the difficulties people have, the objections that are being raised, and the lines on which a solution is to be sought.

[Religion]

So much, then, for the topic of meaning. We now move on to our next chapter, 'Religion.'

[The Question of God]

First of all, the question of God. The question of God is the question of ultimates. It can take very many forms. And to list the many forms it takes would not be very relevant at the present time because one wants to get to the fundamental form. And that, from the viewpoint of a philosophy of interiority, arises when one inquires about inquiry, when one reflects on reflection, when one deliberates about deliberating.

Inquiry seeks to understand. Science, modern science, is only approximately concerned with truth. Its real concern is with an ever-increasing understanding of all phenomena. Now that we should want to understand and that we get a subjective satisfaction from understanding is quite easy to grasp. But why should our subjective understanding, the satisfaction that we get from understanding, have any relevance to knowledge of the world that actually exists? It presupposes that that world is intelligible, that it is something that can be known by understanding; and the question arises, Well, could the world that really exists be intelligible if it didn't have an intelligent ground?

And so you come to the question of God. Just the question, but it's the question of the ground of the intelligibility of the universe.

One can reflect on reflection. We reflect, weigh the evidence, marshal the evidence and weigh it, pass judgment. I have conceived this marshaling and weighing the evidence as grasping a virtually unconditioned. A virtually unconditioned is a conditioned, something that has conditions, but the conditions are fulfilled. But if one speaks of a virtually unconditioned one is also going to speak of what is simply unconditioned, what has no conditions at all. If you talk of one you are going to talk of the other. In more traditional language, the formally unconditioned, what has no conditions whatever, is a necessary being. And a virtually unconditioned, a conditioned with its conditions fulfilled, is a contingent being. Can the world be just contingent beings, does it consist only of virtually unconditioneds, isn't there a formally unconditioned? Once more, one comes to the question of God.

One can deliberate about deliberating. To deliberate is to ask whether any X is worthwhile, and to deliberate about deliberating is to ask about whether it is worthwhile to ask whether anything is worthwhile. The whole process from the nebulae of cosmogenesis, evolution, history: in that whole process, is man the first instance of morality, the first instance of the question, Is this worthwhile? In that case the universe is amoral, and man's concern with morality may be very fine, ideally, but it may be just a stupid gamble. After all, the universe is not moral, and why should he strive against the fates? Isn't the universe absurd, as certain existentialists claim? And if it is absurd, why should we be reasonable and responsible? Once more we come to the question of God. Is there a moral ground to the universe?

This question of God is just a question; it is not any matter of image or feeling or concept or judgment; they all pertain to answers. We are inquiring into inquiring, reflecting on reflection, deliberating about deliberating. The question about God is questioning turning back on itself, asking how the world can be intelligible, asking about

the sphere of transcendent being that contingent being needs, asking whether asking whether things are worthwhile is worthwhile.

Because the question of God is located in the originating powers of conscious intentionality, inquiring into inquiring, reflecting on reflecting, deliberating about deliberating, it is a question that can be manifested in very many ways, in the many varieties of human culture, and in the many stages of man's historical development. Such differences are secondary; they easily introduce secondary elements that overlay, obscure, distort the pure question that questions about questioning. But the obscurity and distortion presuppose what they obscure and distort. It follows that however much religious and irreligious answers differ, however much there differ the questions that actually are raised, still, at their root there's a single transcendental tendency of the human spirit that questions, that questions without restriction, that asks about the possibility of an intelligible world, about the ground of facticity, about the worthwhileness of deliberating, and so about God.

The question of God, then, lies within man's horizon. Unless man is reaching forth for the intelligible, the unconditioned, the worthwhile, his transcendental and self-transcending subjectivity is mutilated, he is less than a man. But the reach of his intending, not of his achieving but of his intending, is unrestricted. You are not to brush questions aside without any reason whatever. There can be mistaken questions, certainly; but they are not mistaken a priori. There lies, then, within man's horizon a region for the divine, a shrine for ultimate holiness. It cannot be ignored. The atheist may pronounce it empty. The agnostic may urge he sees nothing there. The humanist may wish to burke the question. But their negating supposes the spark in our clod, our native orientation towards the divine.

The existence of the question of God is the fundamental thing at the present time, I believe. It is not proving the existence of God; it is acknowledging that the question exists.

Now, the question of God as so put is not just a question of experiencing, understanding, and judging. It is not simply a question for speculative intellect; it is also the question, Is deliberating worthwhile? Is the universe moral? It is also a question on the fourth level.

Now there we come to recognize three attitudes that one can take towards this question of God. There is the Scholastic, rationalist, and idealist answer. They all believe in necessary truths, and when truths are necessary and self-evident there is no danger of subjectivity upsetting the picture. If they are necessary and self-evident, the thing goes of itself, plain as day. And so we have Scholastic efforts to prove the existence of God; rationalist approaches to the question: Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Wolff; the idealist approaches: Fichte, Schelling, Hegel. That is one stream. However, in Kant there emerges the priority of practical reason; in Kierkegaard the priority of faith; in Newman the priority of conscience; in Dilthey the priority of life; in Schopenhauer the priority of will and imagination, representation; in Blondel the priority of action; in Ricoeur's *La Philosophie de la volonte*, three volumes, or two volumes and one with two parts so far; and all the personalists and existentialists. They want will, or life, or conscience, or faith to be the fundamental answer.

[Grace]

For the theologian the fundamental answer, the first part in the answer, is God's gift of his grace, the priority of grace, as set forth in the Councils of Carthage, Orange, and Trent, and elsewhere.

Now, if we are going to talk about grace we have to decide how we are going to talk about it. One can talk about it in the medieval, fundamentally metaphysical categories. For St Thomas, sanctifying grace is an entitative, absolutely supernatural habit received in the essence of the soul and the source whence proceed operative habits,

particularly faith, hope, and charity, that are received in the potencies of the soul; and so you have grace conceived in a manner that fundamentally is metaphysical.

However, if your philosophy, fundamentally, is a philosophy not of metaphysics but of interiority, your approach to grace has to be in the same order; it has to have something to do with experience. Treating grace in that way will call for, first of all, a consideration of the room in us for grace; and, secondly, the nature of the experience of grace; something has to be said of that; and thirdly, the distribution of grace; and fourthly, the relation of grace to faith; and, finally, the relation of faith and beliefs.

The room in us, then, for grace. We have said that human authenticity consists in self-transcendence. The simplest conception of that is to contrast man's desire for satisfactions and his adherence, his devotion, to values. However, the whole of the human being is a succession of stages in which we get beyond ourselves. Ludwig Binswanger has contrasted dreams of the night and dreams of the morning. In the dream of the night the determining factors are somatic, the state of one's digestion, or something like that. But in the dream of the morning, the *Existenz*, the subject, is beginning to take his stance within his world; he is going beyond the unconscious existing of the coma or of dreamless sleep in both cases; but in the second case, in the dream of the morning, he is beginning to relate himself to his world, not merely to his subjective dispositions. When he awakens, the world takes on an entirely different aspect. The dream is fragmentary, symbolic, obscure; for waking consciousness there are endless colors to be seen, sounds to be heard, fabrics to be touched, odors to be smelt, and so on.

There is a further step. Not only is man awake; he begins asking questions. In answering his questions he begins to construct, to serialize, to extrapolate, to generalize, to construct a whole world mediated by meaning, a world that lies beyond his experience and the experience of any other individual, and that is more than the sum of everyone's experience, namely, it is organized intelligently and it is affirmed rationally.

Moving beyond the level of intelligence to the level of reflection, one reaches, in some cases at least, the virtually unconditioned; and one says that this is so; really and

truly, this is so; and he is getting to something that is independent of himself. When one says that this or that is so or not so, one doesn't mean that that's what appears to be so, or what seems to be so, or what I am inclined to think is so, or what I would say is so. You are not talking about yourself at all; you are talking about *it*, and you are positing it absolutely. It may be rare that you do that, but when you do it (and people do, everyone does), he is going beyond himself, he is reaching something that is unconditioned, and, consequently, independent of himself.

Finally, on the level of deliberation, evaluation, decision, man can become a principle of benevolence and beneficence. Insofar as he is not merely responding to his desire for satisfactions but responding to values, he is becoming capable of loving, becoming capable of genuine collaboration; he is moving beyond himself in a final way.

Such, then, is the room in us for grace. For if we ask how people achieve this self-transcendence, when does it become not merely a possibility but a reality, the answer is fairly simple. One actually is self-transcending when one falls in love, when one is in love. When a person is in love he has a new first principle that is at the root of all his desiring and thinking and acting. That first principle takes over; he becomes a different person. Love is of different kinds. There is the love of intimacy of husband and wife, parents and children, brothers and sisters. There is the love of human welfare, the welfare of mankind in one's community, in one's country, in the world. And, finally, there is the love of God. The love of God is commanded in both the Old Testament and the New: 'Thou shall love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and with thy whole soul and all thy mind and all thy strength.' God's gift of his love is affirmed in the New Testament: 'God's love has flooded our hearts through the Holy Spirit given us (Rom. 5.5). And in Romans 8.37-38, 'I know that there is nothing in the whole world that can separate us from the love of our Lord Jesus Christ.'

There is that existence of Christian love, and insofar as that Christian love is God's grace, and it is a fundamental grace, we have what is meant by grace in a Christian tradition. Just how we are going to experience that grace is a further question; but it is

that that people are talking about when they talk about grace. You will know them by their fruits; the harvest of the Spirit, according to St Paul, is love, joy, peace, gentleness, kindness, patience, self-control (Galatians 5.22).

So much for a general description of grace.

Now Abraham Maslow has a recent book, 1970, *Values, Religion and Peak Experiences*. For some time he had been concerned with peak experiences; for example, in his book of about 1963, *Towards a Psychology of Being*. But in his earlier writings he thought peak experiences were rather rare; it was the exceptional person that had any peak experiences. In the later book he thinks that there has to be something wrong with the person who doesn't have peak experiences, that it is due to the fact that he is very materialistic or very rationalistic or excessively devoted to science or something like that. He will repress or suppress anything in the way of a peak experience. However, while he thinks they are common, he doesn't think that people ordinarily know about them; they don't occur with a label on them: this is a peak experience; they have them but they don't know they have them.

Now, let us try and characterize this being-in-love with God that St Paul tells the Romans they have; 'God's love has flooded our hearts through the Holy Spirit given to us.'

And, first of all, is it an act or a state? It is not just an act. Achieving self-transcendence is achieving a dynamic state; it is not an occasional instance of authenticity; it is something that goes on that is per se, of itself, permanent; it is not an act of loving but a state of being in love. You say that people fall in love and that they are in love; it is that state.

It is love of a particular kind; it is unlimited; it is without reservation or limitation or qualification; it is with one's whole heart and whole soul and all one's mind and all one's strength. Consequently, because it is without any limitations or reservations it is not a love of something finite, something in this world; it is a love of something that is transcendent in loveableness. Do we know that something that is transcendent in

loveableness? Is it known or unknown? If you read Rahner, you will know that God is mystery. When he is commenting on Ignatius's discernment of spirits in the Second Week of the Exercises, there is a fundamental element in it: when you have a consolation without a cause. He explains that consolation without a cause as a consolation with a content but without a known object. Consequently, one can tie it in with Rudolph Otto's description of the holy as the *mysterium fascinans et tremendum*. It is a *mysterium* because it is not known as an object; it is *fascinans*, you are not merely attracted to it, you are in love with it, it holds you; and it is *tremendum*, it is something beyond limitations, beyond the finiteness of this world; that *tremendum* takes on different meanings in different stages in the spiritual life.

One can connect it with what Paul Tillich called being grasped by ultimate concern. One has a fuller account of it in such a book as William Johnston's *The Mysticism of the Cloud of Unknowing*. Johnston is an Irish Jesuit who has been in Japan for about twenty years, and has a good deal to do with Zen.

A good Scholastic may put in an objection at this point: if there is no known object, how can you be in love with it? *Nihil amatum nisi praecognitum, ignoti nulla cupido*, and so on. In general, those principles are true. They state the priority of experiencing, understanding, and judging before you start deliberating. But God's gift of his grace is introducing something entirely new. God's gift of his grace will start the subject off on a new track; it will transvalue his values; it will give rise, as we shall see momentarily, to faith, and faith will give rise to beliefs.

In general, the priority of grace is a priority. God doesn't need to give us knowledge in order to give his grace; he can give us the grace and thereby enable us to acquire the knowledge needed.

Now the distribution of grace. According to the theologians, God gives all men sufficient grace for salvation. What is a sufficient grace for salvation? I think it is God's gift of his love. I think you will find evidence for that if you read 1 Corinthians 13, where if you haven't got charity, well nothing else is any good. So the sufficient grace would be

the gift of charity, the gift of this state of grace. And that can be confirmed from the history of religions. Friedrich Heiler, in an essay in a book entitled *The History of Religions*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959 and reprinted 1961, says that there are common elements that can be found in all the higher religions: in Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Iranian Mazdaism of a certain species, I forget the species, and in Taoism. These common elements he lists as, first, the existence of a transcendent reality; second, the immanence of that transcendent reality in human hearts; the description of that reality as highest in truth, reality, righteousness, goodness; the description of it as love; the way to that reality as prayer and self-denial, as love of one's neighbor, even of one's enemies; and finally, that bliss consists in knowledge of that reality, union with it, or dissolution into it.

Now all of those can be connected or arrived at simply from considering the state of love that I've already been describing. It is being in love with something that is transcendent in loveableness. Being in love is being in love with someone or something. Consequently, there is a transcendent reality because this loving is unlimited, unrestricted. It is immanent in human hearts; it is real to you because that love in you is something real. It is highest in truth, reality, righteousness, goodness, because it is the fulfillment of man's aspiration to self-transcendence. Man aspires to self-transcendence simply because he seeks the intelligible, the true, the real, the good. What fulfills human aspiration, consequently, must be what is highest in intelligibility and truth and reality and goodness. The way to him is through prayer and self-denial. Well, it is the fulfillment of self-transcendence. Because you are in love, it is loving attention to God, to that reality. Consequently, it is prayer. It is self-denial because it is self-transcendence; it is getting beyond one's selfishness. Again, the way to him is love of one's neighbor, and even of enemies, because it is a gift of love, and that love not only is love of God but it overflows into love of one's neighbor. Finally, because he is mystery, there is a desire for knowledge of him, and because it is love there is desire for union with him. And

consequently, bliss is conceived as knowledge of him and union with him or dissolution into him.

We can't do more than take one testimony. This sort of thing can be disputed an awful lot, and you are not going to get historians of religion making general statements very easily, such as Heiler did. But there is some evidence, at least.

Again, in religions generally, there is the inner experience and the outer occasion. People have experienced this love of God more at some times than at others. There will be an outer occasion for that experience, and this seems to be the explanation of the hierophany. Something becomes a sacred object, and it can do just at that instant, just at that moment. You can have as a result almost endless hierophanies. Shintoism is described as a living polytheism, and they have about 800,000 deities. Every occasion on which people have religious experience becomes another hierophany, another revelation of God characterized by the occasion of the experience. You have the God of the person, the God of Jacob, the God of Laban, because the experiences are associated with the individual rather than with occasions. You have the God of the place, the god of Bethel, because of the experiences associated with that place. You have the God of the group or the gods of the group.

One can go on, because man's being is dialectical. In other words, self-transcendence is never something that is a serene and secure possession. Human authenticity is always a withdrawal from unauthenticity. Our advance in understanding is a correction of our misunderstanding, and our advance in truth is a correction of our errors, and our advance in goodness is a correction of our faults; our arrival at religion, in the full sense, is withdrawal from all the traps into which religion can mislead us. And so while we can talk about the universal distribution of God's grace, we can also acknowledge the possibility of all the aberrations that certainly have occurred.

I've been talking about love. I want to go on to speak about faith in a very general sense and, then, in a more specific sense. In the very general sense, I will speak of faith as the eye of love. I will proceed from Pascal's noted statement, *le coeur a ses raisons que*

la raison ne connait pas, the heart has reasons that reason does not know. By the heart I'll understand intentional consciousness on the fourth level of deliberating, evaluating, deciding, of a person who is in love with God, that is given God's grace, the gift of being in love with God. The heart has reasons that reason does not know. By reason I'll understand the first three levels: the level of experiencing, understanding, and judging. By the reasons that the heart knows, I'll understand the apprehensions of value that are due to one's being in love with God. According to Max Scheler, the fundamental component in the apprehension of values and in the rejection of disvalues is love and hatred. It is love that reveals the values that otherwise you do not see. Consequently, there is an eye to love; the fact that you are in love means that you are going to discern values that you would not otherwise. And so you have St Paul, 1 Corinthians 2.16, saying that the unspiritual man cannot understand it, understand people being religious; it is beyond their horizon, it is beyond their field of vision; and the spiritual man can judge securely. So faith conceived as the eye of love is a principle that sets up a horizon that opens one up to values and, among other things, to the value of beliefs.

Now, Christian faith is not simply that eye of love that comes from God's gift of his love; it also has an objective component: God's revelation of himself in the Old Testament and in the New. He spoke to us of old through the prophets and most recently in his Son. There, with that addition, one comes to the Catholic concept of faith which is an acceptance of truths, an acceptance of the community that has transmitted to us our traditions.